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Photographing *Titus Andronicus*: Textual Fidelity, Spectacle, and the Performance Tradition

Sally Barnden

Among the various traces and records used to commit theatrical performance into the archive, photographs are both particularly tantalizing and problematic. The notion that photographs afford direct access to a past performance is an attractive one, despite cautions that theatre photographs may not reproduce authentic lighting or blocking, that their stillness distorts the recollection of a dynamic performance, and that they are selected deliberately by marketing teams to give a specific interpretation of an event. Barbara Hodgdon, Rodrigue Villeneuve, Joel Anderson, and others have analyzed the relationship between photographs and performances, noting a tension between the desire for a documentary record and the awareness that a photograph does not only preserve the memory of performance, but also constructs it.¹ Theatre photographs often reappear as synecdoche for performances, illustrating print histories, and occasionally as exhibited artworks in theatre foyers, asserting a rich heritage by dressing the present performance in the leftovers of its predecessors. The extent to which photographs have their own complex histories as participants in theatre can be overlooked in debates around the capacity or otherwise of photographs to document performances. As well as reaffirming the challenges of using photographs as evidence for theatre history, awareness of their complexity should prompt us to look more closely at the histories of theatre photographs and their afterlives.

This essay examines two case studies, photographs made a century apart in relation to performances of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* in 1850 and 1955, to consider how the contexts of their production and display complicate the histories of those performances. Despite their chronological disparity, the images are similar in several important ways beyond their shared source text. The photographs had the challenging task of representing visually the prestige associated with the actors, the visual spectacle and sensational plot of the play, and the relationship of this production—and this problematic text—to the revered figure of Shakespeare. Its violent subject matter made *Titus Andronicus* all but unperformable in the 1850s, and it remained unpopular well into the twentieth century. In these productions the participation of celebrity actors mitigated some of the play's unpopularity. These photographs deploy the celebrity personas of their respective subjects, Ira Aldridge and Vivien Leigh, to manage the uneasiness surrounding a play as violent as *Titus Andronicus* and to negotiate its relationship to the classical, decorous position occupied by Shakespeare in their respective theatrical cultures. Focusing on the embodied pasts of these archival records allows us to see how a photograph might become detached from the performance it ostensibly records, become a canonical image in its own right, and accrue meaning outside the archive. Captioned in galleries and reproduced in print editions of the play, these images return to

and recuperate the text of *Titus Andronicus* despite, in both cases, originating in performances that cut large portions of that text. This essay examines the production and reception of these two images in detail in order to show that their injection of celebrity personas into the paratexts of *Titus Andronicus* is calculated to bring the play into line with Shakespeare's more mainstream, digestible tragedies.

These photographs are considered against the long history of *Titus Andronicus* in performance and print. When photographs are connected with performances of Shakespearean plays, their afterlife as exhibit and illustration does not only negotiate recollection of the specific performance; less subject to temporal limits than performance itself, performance photographs may endure as supplements and provocations to the text of the play. Performance photographs represent interpretive responses to texts, or to the textual fragments appropriated for image captions. In many cases it is not the performances themselves, but their photographic synecdoche that shape their legacy and bequests to future productions. Shaping performance history, photographs assert influence over future incarnations of a dramatic text; reappearing as illustrations alongside that text, they can sway the reader by prompting an interpretation or generating a mood. As performance history or textual illustration, the photograph is also a site of intertextuality. A particularly persuasive supplementary narrative engaged by photographs is that of celebrity: the cultural baggage of a well-known actor informs a photograph's afterlife and the influence it exerts on performance history.

Where it is associated with a canonical text, the photograph may function as a kind of metric for any given performance's relationship to that text's prior performance history. Richard Schoch asks whether we should consider performance to be "a living archive, an embodiment and preservation of past performances, [or] a source of novelty and innovation that spurns its own past."² In the historiography of Shakespearean performance this tension is heightened, because the longevity and prestige of the literary tradition weigh heavily on contemporary revivals, and in turn because that weight makes practitioners particularly anxious that their work stand out as a creative rather than derivative instance in a long series of performances. Photographs are often tasked with negotiating the relation between tradition and innovation for audiences and later for historians; Hodgdon has suggested that they have "a double history" as marketing before the performance and archive material after it.³ They show us specific decisions made for the production: a costume, a single pose, a moment of proximity among actors, a fleeting expression captured in close-up. They may also put new actors into the poses and compositions of old images, demonstrating the lineage of a specific production and its inheritance from previous incarnations of the text. We can examine this ambivalence more closely by reorienting our attention to photographs, to treat them not as a means of access to a past performance, but rather as a theatrical process that takes place alongside the labor of staging the production. Technological and artistic choices involved in making the photograph, as

well as hanging and printing choices in its dissemination, have significant consequences for its relationship to a text and its performance history.

The case of *Titus Andronicus* is a useful one, because despite the play's notoriety and its regular revivals in recent decades, it has been, for most of its history, at the very edge of the Shakespeare canon, just on the cusp of the apocrypha. Edward Ravenscroft queried Shakespeare's authorship of the original in the paratexts of his 1678 adaptation, complaining, "'tis the most incorrect and indigested piece in all his Works; It seems rather a heap of Rubbish then a Structure."⁴ William Hazlitt reiterated Ravenscroft's doubts in the early nineteenth century, calling the play "as unlike Shakespeare's usual style as it is possible . . . an accumulation of vulgar physical horrors."⁵ Fidelity to the text of *Titus Andronicus* might demonstrate deference to Shakespeare, but equally, departure from it might show a desire to insulate the playwright from his most uncouth work. Absent from the stage for long periods of its afterlife, the play is more available for innovation than many of Shakespeare's plays, but its prominent visual spectacles—almost exclusively spectacles of violence—afford the visual remains of performances unusual consistency. The two photographs anatomized below have both been frequently reproduced in editions of *Titus Andronicus* and also within other contexts, and both have also been displayed independently as pieces of visual art. As such, although they originate with specific performances of *Titus Andronicus*, they have also been the site of further encounters with the play in the decades since those performances, thus shaping memories of the events, the performers, and of Shakespeare himself as represented through this controversial text.

These photographs depict two cruxes of the play's traumatic status—othered Aaron and maimed Lavinia—and originate at two different moments when *Titus Andronicus* made a return to a stage, but was still considered unperformable in its entirety. The first is an engraving from a daguerreotype by Paine of Islington made in connection with the 1850 adaptation of *Titus Andronicus* starring Aldridge as Aaron. The adaptation, with textual amendments by C. A. Somerset, was a star vehicle for Aldridge—an opportunity for an actor most famous for playing Othello to take on Shakespeare's other Moor, but rewritten to neutralize Aaron's wickedness. The image does function as a partial record of the performance, but as I will show, it also disseminates Aldridge's star persona and negotiates a complex relationship to the original Shakespearean text. The second photograph, by Angus McBean, is of Leigh as Lavinia in Peter Brook's 1955 production, in which Leigh acted opposite her husband, Laurence Olivier, playing her father, Titus. Brook saw the play as "the expression of a powerful and eventually beautiful barbaric ritual."⁶ The photograph deploys Leigh's celebrity and her physical beauty as a means of controlling its representation of atrocity: by making Lavinia conspicuous, but defusing the image's potential to shock by smoothing her incomplete body into aesthetic cohesion, this photograph, like Aldridge's representation as Aaron,

remodels the problematic content of the play as a legible image. Both photographs were constructed with a view to dressing the relevant productions in celebrity and prestige—supported by, but also in spite of, the text of *Titus Andronicus*.

The first image, using conventions of photographic portraiture and of literary illustration, depicts Aldridge as Aaron in what the caption tells us is act 4, scene 2, standing in front of a stock classical backdrop (fig. 1). The costume supplements Aldridge's blackness with codified markers of Aaron's othered status: leopard print, turban, curved scimitar. A baby lies swaddled on the floor at his feet. The image aspires to a kind of allegorical isolation from the play's narrative, as evidenced by the frame that finds a parallel for Aaron's fierce protectiveness in the image of a bird of prey standing over its crowned fledgling. However, it is also firmly rooted in the text of *Titus Andronicus*, with the scimitar and the baby providing visual counterpoints for the caption: "He dies upon my scimitar's sharp point / That touches this my first-born son and heir."⁷

The fastidious reproduction of textual details suggests fidelity to the text, which is appropriate, given the photograph's appearance in an illustrated *Complete Works* of Shakespeare.⁸ But textual and theatrical contexts destabilize this relationship, given first that Aldridge did not perform Shakespeare's text, but a free adaptation of it; and second that this particular *Complete Works* included *Titus Andronicus* only in a supplementary set of "Doubtful Plays." Hodgdon argues that the practice of using textual quotations to caption theatrical photographs represents "a rhetoric of mourning for an absent text" and leads to a state of affairs in which "the still has value only as it remembers Shakespeare."⁹ The use of quotations from Shakespeare to inventory the content of a photograph perpetuates a text-centric understanding of the image as something produced by and supplementary to the text. Such captions might also be a rudimentary gesture toward asserting the authenticity of a performance still: like a comic-book speech bubble, they encourage us to imagine the characters speaking and acting and undertake the imaginative labor of reconciling the image with the performance. In this case the caption situates the image within a narrative, establishes the dramatic context for Aaron's aggressive display, and accounts for the presence of both baby and scimitar as visual complements to the quotation. This example is typical insofar as it prompts the viewer to understand both image and quotation as synecdoche for the performance. However, the slippage between implied textual fidelity and this performance's uneasy relation to the text makes this an unusual case. The caption has become detached from the rest of the play; the quotation is a fragile point of intersection among the photograph, Aldridge's performance, and the Shakespearean authenticity conferred by inclusion in a printed *Complete Works*.

The images printed in this *Complete Works*, published by John Tallis by subscription, and subsequently in volumes between 1850 and 1853, are among the earliest examples of theatrical (and specifically Shakespearean) photography.¹⁰ However, the images are not strictly photographs in the

modern sense. These daguerreotypes were made by exposing a steel plate coated in photosensitive silver salts. Although they could be intricately detailed, daguerreotypes were not easily reproduced (which is the principal reason for their gradual obsolescence after photography with wet-glass plates became the norm). Attempts were made to transform the daguerreotype directly into a printing plate, but this could not be achieved without destroying the original. The originals of the Tallis daguerreotypes are lost, perhaps for this reason, although it is equally possible that they were simply used as references for the engraving process. The collection includes a mixture of engravings from both paintings and daguerreotypes. The latter are strongly influenced by the former in composition and style to the extent that they are nearly indistinguishable; in one example, a single engraving of a scene from *Julius Caesar* combines a daguerreotype of Edward Davenport as Brutus with a painting of William Charles Macready as Cassius. All the images combine the photographed bodies (or possibly only faces) of the actors with stock backgrounds or artists' impressions of the stage setting, embedding the photographed images within a framework of artistic convention rather than prioritizing a faithful reproduction of performance conditions.

Although they risk becoming visually interchangeable with the painted scenes, the daguerreotypes are an important feature of the edition: the title page of each volume proudly boasts the inclusion of "the Greatest and Most Intellectual Actors of the Age, taken in the Embodiment of the Varied and Life-like Characters of Our Great National Poet."¹¹ Stuart Sillars observes that portraits of named actors had not been common in illustrated editions of Shakespeare since those of John Bell in the 1770s.¹² Victorian editions often used illustration to evoke the themes and mood of the play rather than to depict its embodiment in the theatre. Because of the use of daguerreotypes, the printed plays in Tallis's *Complete Works* were presented as both part of and subject to the contemporary theatre business in a way that was unusual for Victorian illustrated Shakespeares. Given the prevailing nineteenth-century understanding of photographs as direct imprints of reality, the edition asserted an unprecedented material link between the text and its enactment onstage. But this does not necessarily mean that documentary accuracy was a priority for these photographs. The daguerreotypes were made in photographers' studios rather than onstage and did not necessarily reproduce authentic costumes or poses; they would have required an exposure time of anything from about thirty seconds to several minutes. Any suggestion that the images represent frozen instants of these actors' performances therefore should be firmly resisted; rather than an instant fractured from a continuity, these poses are the effect of a stilled performance of some duration, calculated to epitomize or illustrate the performance. It follows that although such images were bought and collected by theatregoers as mementoes, they were not expected to replicate precisely the visual effect of the performance.

The collection was printed in up to fifty-two parts and later sold in three volumes: "Comedies," "Tragedies," and "Dramas on English History, etc." Parts 41–52 were available as a supplementary volume of "Doubtful Plays," which included *Titus Andronicus*, *Pericles*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, as well as several works that are not now generally attributed to Shakespeare, including *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* and *The Birth of Merlin*. Despite the efforts of Ravenscroft, Hazlitt, and others to deny Shakespeare's authorship of *Titus Andronicus* on the grounds of its inelegant plot, its marginalization in printed editions as "doubtful" was not necessarily common practice. August Schlegel had observed in 1808 that "[editors] always allow it to be printed with the other pieces, as the scapegoat, as it were, of their abusive criticism," and a critic of Aldridge's production makes reference to the textual original: "as published in the best editions of Shakespere's [*sic*] works, it would be utterly unfit for representation."¹³ In the subscribers' paperback copies, images were not necessarily included alongside the text they illustrated; however, when the plays were bound into volumes, great care was taken to display images alongside the corresponding scene.¹⁴ The *Titus* image is an exception; although it appeared opposite the correct scene in the rare "Doubtful Plays" volume (in which it was the only image), it was also sometimes included in the canonical volumes, in the ignominious leaves between the notes on *Henry VIII* and the title page for the sonnets. In these cases the engraving appears as a gesture toward completeness on theatrical terms, recognizing the significance of Aldridge's performance and his celebrity as a Shakespearean actor despite its marginalization of the textual *Titus Andronicus*.

The performances to which this image (tangentially) refers took place between 1849 and 1860 in Edinburgh, Belfast, London, and other venues around Britain. Aldridge had a well-established reputation by this time, having made his London debut at the Royal Coburg Theatre (today the Old Vic) in 1825, but he had had greater success in the provinces than in London. He had appeared on the "legitimate" London stage at Covent Garden in 1833, where he replaced the dying Edmund Kean for a few performances of *Othello*.¹⁵ His appearance prompted considerable vitriol from the press and public, outraged at the incursion of a foreign, black actor into the heart of the theatrical establishment. Later, *Othello* was one of his signature roles, particularly when he toured Europe between 1852 and his death in 1867, performing a repertoire that also included the "whiteface" roles of Macbeth, Shylock, Richard III, and King Lear, and one non-Shakespearean role—Mungo in Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Padlock*.¹⁶ Bernth Lindfors suggests that part of Aldridge's motive for producing *Titus Andronicus* was "his desire to return to the London stage" after a period of touring provincial venues.¹⁷ Playing Aaron was a self-promotion opportunity for him, since it is the only other leading black role in Shakespeare's oeuvre. But producing *Titus Andronicus* entailed a complex negotiation of serious drama and melodrama, Shakespearean pedigree and euphemistic adaptation.

Sources of information on Aldridge's performance are scarce; our knowledge of it relies heavily upon newspaper reviews. The text does not survive in full; press commentary indicates that it bore comparatively little narrative resemblance to Shakespeare's play, although we could conjecture that the image caption in Tallis ("He dies upon my scimitar's sharp point . . .") survived the adaptation process, since it conforms to surviving accounts of a scene in which Aaron protects his son from Saturninus: "in Act 5th [*sic*] you will see to what an unparalleled powerful situation for Aaron the abduction of the child by the spies of Saturninus will lead. . . . [W]e preserve in a mitigated form one of the greatest features of the original play."¹⁸ Somerset invoked the authority attached to a Shakespearean pedigree while also boasting of his own creative contribution, since "'Titus Andronicus' as written could not be acted at all."¹⁹ In a note titled "To the Admirers of Shakespeare" on playbills, Somerset insisted that the adaptation retained Shakespeare's poetic authority, because unlike in "all other adaptations of Shakspeare," in this case "horrors only—unfit to meet the Public eye—have been expunged, while the poetic gems, wherewith the play is so profusely studded, are all retained and carefully re-set, forming a cluster of brilliants worthy of a prominent position in the Shaksperian Crown of Immortality."²⁰ This claim is contradicted by accounts of Somerset's substantial additions to the plot, but shows the complex negotiation of Shakespearean authority necessary to stage *Titus Andronicus* while insulating both Shakespeare and the Victorian audience from the play's unpalatable spectacles. Reviews, with considerable relief, report the catalog of horrors excised from the play in Aldridge and Somerset's version:

<extract>

the deflowerment of Lavinia, cutting out her tongue, chopping off her hands, and the numerous decapitations and gross language which occur in the original, are wholly omitted, and a play not only presentable but actually attractive is the result. Aaron is elevated into a noble and lofty character; Tamora, the Queen of Scythia, is a chaste though decidedly strong-minded female, and her connexion with the Moor appears to be of a legitimate description; her sons, Chiron and Demetrius, are dutiful children, obeying the behests of both their mother and—what shall we call him?—their "father-in-law." Old Titus himself is a model of virtue, and the only person whose sanguinary character is not much toned down is Saturninus, the Emperor, who maintains the impurity of the original throughout.²¹

<\extract>

<no ¶ indent>This review does not so much explain what took place in the performance as enumerate the places where it deviates from the original (to the extent that knowledge of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* leaves us at a loss as to the narrative of the adaptation). Primarily reporting absence and dissimilarity, this review leaves us with the impression of a photo-negative *Titus Andronicus*. A review in the *Sunday Times* described the adaptation as "a very common-place

melodrama," dismissing it generically from the classical canon implied by association with Shakespeare.²²

These conflicting accounts of the adaptation's proximity to Shakespeare's original raise questions about the inclusion of an image from it in a *Complete Works* of Shakespeare. The most likely explanation is that the adaptation provided a pretext to include Aldridge himself—a famous and marketable figure. Notwithstanding the hostile reception of his 1833 *Othello*, Aldridge's celebrity was amplified rather than hindered by his race. Although racism in the theatrical establishment had relegated him to a liminal position between serious theatre and melodrama, he had considerable success in Britain and Europe and knew how to monopolize on the novelty of being a black tragedian—a position in which he was unique in Britain until Samuel Morgan Smith followed his career trajectory from America in 1867. He often signed letters using the nickname the newspapers had given him, "the African Roscius," and he encouraged a rumor that he had come to London from Senegal rather than New York.²³ As Krystyna Kujawska Courtney argues, Aldridge succeeded in turning his race "into cultural capital which, at least initially, caught people's interest."²⁴ Bate argues that the adaptation of *Titus Andronicus* was led by a desire "to make the Moor's blackness more prominent": it treated Aaron as the play's protagonist and used Aldridge's celebrity as a black tragedian to stage an unstageable play.²⁵ The hints of orientalism in his photographed costume support this notion that Aldridge was performing blackness for theatre audiences, as well as performing Shakespeare. At the same time, the adaptation made use of *Titus Andronicus*'s liminal position in relation to the Shakespearean canon to accommodate Aldridge's ambivalent cultural capital.

The contexts of this image, then, tell two related stories of partial canonicity. As an illustration it was included in a *Complete Works* of Shakespeare, but one that marginalized *Titus Andronicus* as "doubtful"; as a performance record it occludes the adaptation process by depicting a moment when Somerset's adaptation visually resembled Shakespeare's play and using a Shakespearean caption complete with act and scene reference. The image reproduces textual details from its caption faithfully, and in the allegorical complementary image of two birds within the frame, proposes that the entire image could be similarly legible as a moral emblem. Aldridge poses as a hero within a context that, in the original play, is marked by the villain briefly "posing" as hero by asserting his protectiveness over a newborn baby. As an index of the performance event, this is a problematic image: its tangential relationship to the production as a studio-made daguerreotype means that the access it provides to the event is partial and indirect. As a constructed pose calculated to epitomize that performance event, it gives us a little more: it tells a story of Aldridge's celebrity and virtuosity and of his performance's profound connection to Shakespeare's text, given that the caption is replicated so meticulously in the composition. But this story, as we have seen, is

misleading. Approaching this photograph, its production, and its reception as a theatrical history, related to though distinct from the performance of *Titus Andronicus*, illuminates the ambivalent relation between Aldridge's celebrity and *Titus*'s legitimacy. His celebrity was enough to make the *Titus Andronicus* image extremely popular, and in some volumes it was enough for publishers to include the image, but not the text, in the legitimate pages of the "Dramas on English History, etc." volume rather than solely among the "Doubtful Plays." Posing a tragedian of Aldridge's fame in such a precise replication of a fragment from the playtext looks like a bid to reinvent Aaron as a tragic hero to take his place in the repertoire alongside Othello. Although the performance had mixed success in presenting itself as "legitimate" drama, the photograph successfully reframes Aldridge's performance as an activation of a legitimate Shakespearean text—a text that both publication and performance kept carefully out of focus.

Over a century later, another landmark production of *Titus Andronicus* was documented in photographs. McBean's photographs of the cast of the play in 1955 were made at a photo-call prior to opening in order to be distributed to the press and used to adorn the front of the theatre, and were ultimately preserved in the archives of the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon, where the combination of the birthplace's claim to authorial presence and the well-established theatrical orthodoxy of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre (later the Royal Shakespeare Theatre) impress his images with a stamp of authenticity. Despite this institutional sanction, the belatedness and arrest characteristic of photography ensure that what remains and returns is something subtly other than Brook's *Titus Andronicus*. This photograph, depicting Leigh as Lavinia, originated with the performance, and encountering it in the archive can tell us a certain amount about what the production looked like, how it interpreted the text, and how it was acted (fig. 2). Again, however, the photograph is more revealing if it is considered as an object with its own history, informed by the priorities of McBean, Brook, and Leigh, and later by viewers who may have encountered it in the histories of any of these figures or in accounts of *Titus Andronicus*'s troubled performance history.

As a publicity image the photograph's function was to advertise and cultivate audience expectations of an infrequently performed play. The archive preserves a total of forty-nine production photographs from Brook's *Titus Andronicus*, two of which were also sold as postcards: a portrait of Anthony Quayle as Aaron, and one of Leigh and Olivier together as Lavinia and Titus. The images chosen testify to the substantial role played by celebrity casting in the success of this production, which might otherwise have been a difficult sell to regular Stratford audiences. Leigh and Olivier combined the prestige of theatrical royalty with the marketability of movie stars, and their marriage and physical attractiveness made them figures of idealized romance in the eyes of their fans.²⁶ Despite the play's unfamiliarity and its shocking content, the publicity images do not seem to have functioned as any kind of warning for audiences; although an image from the final

scene shows the banquet table laden with corpses, the photographs tend to shroud representation of the play's violence in stylization and glamour. In the case of this photograph (which has since been reproduced widely), glamour and suffering supplement each other, tangling photographic allure with violence.

The photograph depicts Leigh as Lavinia against a backdrop of stylized trees, which formed part of the set for Brook's ritualistic *Titus Andronicus*. The moment represented is Lavinia's entrance after her rape and mutilation by Chiron and Demetrius—a moment often treated as the epicenter of the play's violent content. The attack on Lavinia was the first on the list of "horrors" that the *Era* critic was anxious to assure his readers had been excluded from Aldridge's adaptation. The subtitle of Ravenscroft's adaptation of the play, "The Rape of Lavinia," implies that the scene's prominence has been consistent across its history. Leigh is alone in the picture, which is framed as a full-length portrait, and her pose, with one arm raised toward her face and her head tilted backward, suggests anguish. Her hair is loose, in contrast to photographs of the previous scene in which it is styled in a regal chignon. Her elaborate costume of draped, textured fabrics incorporates the streamers that were used to evoke the blood shed from her mouth and wrists. Characteristically of McBean's photographs, the lighting and focus are calculated to emphasize the rich textures of her costume and to illuminate her face. The position of her body is partly obscured by the smooth lines of her costume, but the hint of an arched back, the stylized feminine distress of her raised arm, her head tilted back and face turned toward the light with an expression of passive, dignified suffering combine to make Lavinia's pain a vehicle for expressing her, and Leigh's, physical beauty.

Like that of Aldridge, this photograph appears to take inspiration from the text(s) of *Titus Andronicus*, as well as its performance. Leigh's appearance matches the additions that Ravenscroft made to Shakespeare's stage direction for Lavinia's entrance. Shakespeare's direction is near-identical in the 1594 quarto and the 1623 Folio: "*Enter the Empresse sonnes with Lauinia, her handes cut off, and her tongue cut out, & rauisht.*"²⁷ Ravenscroft's amendment—"Enter Chiron, Demetrius, Lavinia her hands Cut-off, and her tongue cut out, Loose hair, and Garments disorder'd, as ravisht"—offers a set of signifiers to mark Lavinia's "rauisht" state in her loose hair and disordered garments.²⁸ In this image Ravenscroft's code for what ravishment looks like is adopted in such a way that it becomes an aesthetic rather than a physical or emotional state: although loose, Leigh's hair is immaculate; although disordered, her garments are elegantly draped. In the photograph trauma is refigured as a visual code; the image offers to make the scene and the atrocity it depicts legible in the loose hair and disordered garments, which we are expected to read as representative of rape.

The choice of tableau suggests that McBean wanted to promote the visual spectacle of the production, and while the manner of its representation is not precisely euphemistic—Lavinia's suffering is made spectacular rather than minimized—it is controlled and contained. Although it is

not an explicitly violent image, photographic arrest demands a prolonged look at Lavinia and the violence encoded in the composition. It is at this point in *Titus Andronicus* that Lavinia is silenced and transformed into the spectacle that is the focal point for the ensuing events. Her body, having been reduced to an "object" by Chiron and Demetrius's attack and her family's scrutiny, becomes the totem around which the Andronici structure their revenge, analogous to the revengers' mementoes that Michael Neill identifies in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Hamlet*: "[t]he familiar emblem of [the revenger's] double function is the *memento* that he typically treasures—a picture, a blood-soaked handkerchief, a cadaver, or a skull."²⁹ Pascale Aebischer observes that Lavinia's centrality is a feature of *Titus Andronicus* in performance that is not present on the page, where Lavinia's silence makes her practically invisible: "[w]hereas in the study, reading *Titus Andronicus* means reading Titus' grief in response to the textual gap left by his daughter's violation, in the theatre, the mutilated rape victim is insistently kept before the audience's eyes for six scenes."³⁰ Although her silence renders Lavinia a gap in the text, the "insistent" quality of her visual presence is further emphasized by Marcus's and Titus's verbal responses to her, particularly Titus's anxious order, "Look, Marcus, ah, son Lucius, look on her!" (3.1.111). This response to Lavinia explicitly draws attention to her potential as an image: he adds, "Had I but seen thy picture in this plight, / It would have madded me" (104–5). These lines might be read ahistorically as an authorial directive that the scene must be photographed to provide an emotive synecdoche for the revenge plot. The textual and theatrical compulsion to look at Lavinia is counterbalanced by suggestions that the sight of her is unbearable, as it was for those who fainted upon her appearance during Lucy Bailey's production at Shakespeare's Globe (2006 and 2014), including the *Independent* reviewer in 2014, who described the moment as "almost (or in my case, literally) unwatchable," but treated this visceral response as evidence of the production doing its work successfully: the comment is made in a four-star review.³¹

Leigh's Lavinia provoked less shock than that of the Bailey production, but her visual command of this scene was remembered by Janet Suzman (who played Lavinia herself in 1972). Suzman described her memory of this moment in Brook's production: "[t]he whole audience gasped" not because the scene was shocking, but "because she was so beautiful!"³² Drawing on reviews, including Richard David's for *Shakespeare Survey*, Bate argues that this entrance was "the most celebrated moment in the performance"—a stylized visual spectacle, played out to "the slow plucking of harp-strings," with the whole of Marcus's monologue cut in order to emphasize the visual effect.³³ Hugo Vickers summarizes critics' responses in his biography of Leigh: "[t]he reviewers thought Vivien's Lavinia a serene sufferer expressing statuesque pathos."³⁴ Vickers's reference to "statuesque pathos" further demonstrates how fully suffering and physical beauty became contingent upon one another in Leigh's Lavinia. Each of these responses reiterates the idea that Lavinia in this

scene already has all the attributes of an image—a work of art—even before she is photographed. The implication is that the scene as staged at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre was aspiring to photographic arrest: the photograph should not perhaps be understood as a remnant of the performance, but its culmination.

McBean's technical practice similarly privileged spectacle and its preservation. He had been among the company's preferred photographers since 1945, when a particularly successful shot of Claire Luce as Cleopatra restored his reputation after he had been imprisoned as a conscientious objector during the war. His relationship with Leigh was already established, having first photographed her in the late 1930s before she appeared in *Gone with the Wind*, and by his own account he had become a favorite of hers. McBean published *Vivien: A Love Affair in Camera*, a photo-illustrated memoir and biography, in 1989. The book takes a romantic view of the relationship between photographer and subject, emphasizing the personal connection and trust at the root of the collaboration, but also dwelling obsessively on Leigh's body as an artistic surface, particularly on the notion of "flawlessness" and the photographer's responsibility to idolize the actress's face. He remarks on Leigh's "flawlessness" while explaining his professional standards in *Vivien*:

<extract>

I supplied eight finished, retouched, mounted and signed 8" x 6" prints. No one ever saw a rough proof from me. Vivien Leigh retouched? The flawless Vivien Leigh? The answer is, yes. The colour-corrected photographic emulsions of today did not exist then and every tiny spot, every broken vein, every freckle, photographed black or nearly black. So why should a photographer immortalize the errant blemish which is here today and gone tomorrow?³⁵

<\extract>

<no ¶ indent>McBean's priorities privilege the permanent image of the actress's face as historically "flawless" over the "errant blemish" visible on any given occasion. This point of view treats the image's endurance as more vital than its accurate representation of the particular event; the function of the photograph is not straightforwardly as a record, but as the perfect representation of an event that, as far as posterity is concerned, is an effect rather than a cause of the image.

McBean took posed images rather than working around the scene as performed and directed actors during photo-calls, leading the performance historian Dennis Kennedy to advise caution when using his images as sources from which to reconstruct a production, suggesting that "the McBean case points out the general documentary difficulty of pictorial evidence [for performance historiography]."³⁶ That is to say, all performance photographs have the capacity to distort or misremember performance, but McBean's practice, especially his prioritizing of artistry in the lasting image over fidelity to the transient event, heightens the extent to which photographs may be misleading sources. His usual practice was to see the whole play in a late rehearsal and then select

scenes and tableaux to photograph. He used old-fashioned glass negatives, brought his own lighting equipment to the theatre, and deployed substantial retouching. McBean's photographs have a monumentalizing effect on human figures: his sharp focus, classical poses, attention to texture, and the smoothness of the human skin in his pictures combine to make them appear aloof and abstracted. Adrian Woodhouse comments on the style that set McBean apart from his contemporaries:

<extract>

The use of high contrasts and high shine—the velvety blacks and the infinite variety of depth and smoothness of the half-tones . . . his Mannerist command of shadows and his ability to brush life into skin tones . . . and his use of dramatic blacks attracted attention when his pictures appeared outside theatres. . . . Because he could draw on faces with light and shadow so effortlessly, McBean specialized like no other British photographer of the period in the close-up: the face as mask or icon. . . . The effect is blatantly idolatrous. . . . Angus McBean's close-ups . . . were meant for worship.³⁷

<\extract>

<no ¶ indent>Again, this description emphasizes permanence over transience, the divine and immortal qualities of the actor's face "as mask or icon."

Woodhouse's emphasis on the painterly quality and "command of shadows" in McBean's work is indicative of a perceived artistic autonomy greater than was usually afforded to theatre photographers at the time. Where the daguerreotypist "Paine of Islington" is a near-invisible presence in the provenance of Aldridge's image, McBean's reputation seems to demand that he be considered an author of this photograph. Combined with Brook's ritualistic direction, McBean's images exaggerate the monumental quality of the 1955 *Titus Andronicus*, translating spectacular violence into classical forms. The photograph's idolatrous regard for Leigh's presence blurs her identity with that of Lavinia as ornamental photographic subject to be obsessively looked at.³⁸ Photographs had been a key ingredient of Leigh's celebrity persona throughout her career. In 1938 she had enlisted McBean to take a series of headshots to send to David O. Selznick, "[v]ery much aware of the power of her beauty" and determined to secure the role of Scarlett O'Hara.³⁹ This story, reported in both McBean's memoir and Kendra Bean's biography of Leigh, is representative of a trend that treats Leigh's physical appearance as her most marketable quality, and photographs, particularly McBean's, as the means of advancing and sustaining her celebrity. In the image from *Titus Andronicus* the combined artistic control of McBean and Brook diminishes the suggestion that Leigh herself had authority over the image, even while it deploys her celebrity and reputed "flawlessness." A silencing of the actress is entailed in the assessment of this photograph as technically and artistically accomplished. Brook's and McBean's reputations for virtuosity reduce Leigh's body to a blank surface to be written on by male artists, to be made legible as a figure in which beauty and anguish are mutually dependent.

Embedded in the Stratford archive, this photograph seems to remember a performance of unusual visual splendor and classical poise, although it is uncertain that its actual composition replicates a detail of the performance, and the lighting is almost certainly inauthentic. Beyond the shallow observation of the photograph's beauty, much of its meaning depends not on the circumstances of the production and the photographic practice that produced it, but on its contexts of display: first, as promotional material for *Titus Andronicus*, and subsequently in the archive, in the photographer's gallery, and in works of theatre history. Its original function as advertisement promised a spectacle of both beauty and suffering, inviting audiences to approach *Titus Andronicus*'s violence as an aesthetic pleasure. Subsequent displays situate this performance within the history of *Titus Andronicus*—this Lavinia is statuesque and bloodless in black and white, representative of a refined era of Shakespeare performance in Stratford—or in the trajectory of Leigh's career, as an image of her dignified suffering and undimmed physical beauty at a time when she was struggling with bipolar disorder and hostile criticism of her work, particularly from Kenneth Tynan. In retrospective performance histories this photograph may be positioned in relation to later, gorier Lavinias, who are photographed in color, undoing the taming effect that black-and-white photography has on [depictions of] stage violence. This spectacle has been photographed repeatedly, establishing a narrative in images of mutilated female bodies, which demand audiences' and characters' gazes. Although the tendency of later productions has been to make this moment gorier and to emphasize violence at the expense of aesthetic pleasure, we can nonetheless perceive the influence of both this production and photograph in later versions of the image. Most notably, Yukio Ninagawa's 2004–06 *Titus Andronicus*, perhaps in homage to Brook, used streamers to represent Lavinia's bleeding mouth and arms. Ellie Kurtz's photograph of Hitomi Manaka in the role quotes McBean's of Leigh, with its stylized background, careful composition, and use of fabric and long hair to create the legible shapes of feminine anguish. However, Manaka is captured in motion, the red streamers flying outward as she gestures with her arms. The effect is that she seems more in control of her representation than the statuesque Leigh; her "*rauisht*" state is embodied rather than codified, and as such demands a different kind of attention.

Analyses of these images' histories supports the critical caution against an understanding of theatre photographs as a form of visual access to past performances. Neither of these photographs can be relied upon as a faithful representation of the performance it apparently records; the poses, costumes, lighting, and sets may or may not be authentic to those of the performances. Like most theatre photographs, these images are subject to a variety of different ideological and aesthetic concerns: the publicity for a particular theatre or company; the self-fashioning of an actor, photographer, or director; political and social notions of what is acceptable and displayable; and so on. My aim in this essay has been to treat the histories of these photographs *as* theatre history—a

narrative separate from, but intimately related to, the histories of the performances themselves. The processes of posing for, taking, displaying, and consuming photographs are crucial parts of theatrical production, and as such are worthy of theatre historians' attention. An exploration of the contexts within which these photographs were made and displayed reveal meanings and desires attached to productions of what was, in both periods, a rarely performed and controversial play.

During the 1850s a daguerreotype could not be made in a theatre nor be reproduced except as an engraving, probably with a stock background. As a result, the image of Aldridge tells us almost nothing about the production except its aspiration toward the cultural hegemony represented by Shakespeare's works—in particular, fidelity to his texts. During the 1950s McBean was slightly behind a trend that had begun to produce more immediate, news-style photographs privileging the transient performance moment over the monumental text (for example, those of Julie Hamilton at London's Royal Court Theatre). His photograph of Leigh aspires to the glamour and aloofness of the previous generation's movie stars and again defers to Shakespeare's text with its careful adherence to stage directions and descriptions of Lavinia's state, translating her body into a legible kind of spectacle. In both cases characters from the play are posed as types: Aaron as heroic and exotic, Lavinia as beautiful and tragic—and these types are underpinned with the public personas of the celebrity actors who posed them. The star personas, constituted by the actors' previous work, other images, and various types of commentary written about them since they had been in the public eye, haunt the photographs. They reinforce the representation of the characters from *Titus Andronicus* with complementary narratives of Aldridge himself as a racial outsider who shows his audience unexpected nobility, and Leigh as aloof and beautiful though tantalizingly fragile in a way that invites voyeuristic scrutiny.⁴⁰ The carefully constructed poses present *Titus Andronicus* as glamorous and decorous, disavowing the troubled history of the text and its sparse performance history until the late twentieth century. Although both photographs appear to be faithful to the text, they encourage a partial apprehension of *Titus Andronicus*, obscuring its uglier elements or at least reimagining them in an aesthetically pleasing fashion. This allows them to engage Shakespeare as a further star phenomenon—not a Shakespeare who has revealed an unsettling propensity for violence and horror, but the decorous, traditional Shakespeare of the legitimate stage. In turn, the putative universality of such a Shakespeare is reified in these photographs by his capacity to represent contemporary stars back to audiences in forms that confirm the central narratives of their celebrity.

FIGURE CAPTIONS:

Figure 1. Ira Aldridge as Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* (ca.1850). Engraving from a daguerreotype by Paine of Islington. (Source: Folger Shakespeare Library ART file A 365.5 no. 1, reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.)

Figure 2. Vivien Leigh as Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* (1955). (Photo: Angus McBean, reproduced by permission of the Royal Shakespeare Company.)

FOOTNOTES:

¹ See Barbara Hodgdon, "Photography, Theater, Mnemonics; or Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Still," in *Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theatre History*, ed. W. B. Worthen, with Peter Holland (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 88–119; Hodgdon, *Shakespeare, Performance and the Archive* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016); Rodrigue Villeneuve, "Photography of Theatre: Images Always Fail" (trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott), *Canadian Theatre Review* 64 (1990): 32–37; and Joel Anderson, *Theatre & Photography* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

² Richard Schoch, "Commemorating Shakespeare in Performance: Betterton and Irving," in *Celebrating Shakespeare: Commemoration and Cultural Memory*, ed. Clara Calvo and Coppélia Kahn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 38–56, quote on 38.

³ Hodgdon, "Photography, Theater, Mnemonics," 89.

⁴ Edward Ravenscroft, "To the Reader," in *Titus Andronicus, or The Rape of Lavinia, Acted at the Theatre Royall, A Tragedy, Alter'd from Mr. Shakespeares Works* (London: Printed by J. B. for J. Hindmarsh, 1686).

⁵ William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (London: John Templeman, 1838), 317.

⁶ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York: Touchstone, 1968), 95.

⁷ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Arden, 1995), 4.2.93–94.

⁸ The image's textual fidelity in this respect makes Jonathan Bate's assertion that "Aldridge's Aaron, with his glistening scimitar . . . is indistinguishable from Othello" a startling one, particularly given that Othello's sword is explicitly a "sword of Spain" (5.2) rather than a Moorish scimitar. The Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice* and Achilles in *Troilus and Cressida* are the only characters besides Aaron to whom Shakespeare gives a "scimitar." See Bate, "Staging the Unspeakable: Four Versions of *Titus Andronicus*," in *Shakespeare from Text to Stage*, ed. Patricia Kennan and Mariangela Tempera (Bologna: Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria Editrice, 1992), 100.

⁹ Hodgdon, "Photography, Theater, Mnemonics," 99.

¹⁰ The prints were sold separately around the same time and reappeared in John Tallis, *Tallis's Drawing Room Book of Theatrical Portraits, Memoirs and Anecdotes* (London: John Tallis, 1851). The engraving of Aldridge as Aaron is among the most frequently reproduced of the set and appears in several modern editions of *Titus Andronicus*, including those of Bate, Eugene M. Waith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), and Alan Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 2006 [2nd ed.]). There is also a larger framed print displayed in the Dress Circle Bar at the Old Vic Theatre (which was the venue for Aldridge's first London performance, although never for his *Titus Andronicus*).

¹¹ James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakspeare, Revised from the Original Editions. With Historical and Analytical Introductions to Each Play, also Notes Explanatory and Critical, and a Life of the Poet* (London: John Tallis, 1850–53), title page.

¹² Stuart Sillars, *Shakespeare, Time and the Victorians: A Pictorial Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 169.

¹³ Augustus William Schlegel, "Appendix to Lecture XXVI," in *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, trans. John Black, 2 vols. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846), 442; "Theatres, &c.," *The Era*, April 26, 1857, 10.

¹⁴ There were exceptions to this: among the five volume sets in the Folger Shakespeare Library (FSL), one replicates the image distribution of the paperback subscription copies (FSL, PR2755.H3 B3n v.3 Sh. Coll.). All others rearrange images to correspond to the text.

¹⁵ Until 1843, "legitimate" drama, including Shakespeare, could only be performed at theatres that held a royal patent; in London the patent theatres were Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

¹⁶ The digital project "19th Century Acts!" archives Aldridge's career in networks of related images and maps of his performance patterns. As well as offering an indispensable resource, the project asserts the key role of images, including paintings, prints, drawings, and photographs in recording Aldridge's career and shaping his legacy. See Anita Gonzalez et al., "19th Century Acts!," University of Michigan, available at <http://19thcenturyacts.com/>; and Gonzalez, "Aldridge in Action: Building a Digital Interface," *Theatre Journal* 68, no. 4 (2016), online only.

¹⁷ Bernth Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge: The Vagabond Years, 1833–1852* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 170.

¹⁸ Letter to Ira Aldridge, signed C. A. Somerville [*sic*], transcribed in Cyril Braun Andrews, "Black Ebony: The Story of Ira Aldridge (Known as the African Roscius)," February 16, 1849, 91–92, an unpublished typescript in the Ira Aldridge Collection at Northwestern University Libraries; cited in Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge*, 166.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Playbills of the Theatre, Belfast, May 10, 1850, Ulster Museum, Belfast; Edinburgh Adelphi Theatre, July 24, 1850, FSL; Theatre Royal, Plymouth, January 12, 15, 1852, Plymouth: all cited in *ibid.*, 168.

²¹ "Theatres, &c."

²² "Britannia Saloon—Titus Andronicus," *Sunday Times*, March 21, 1852, 3.

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- ²³ Drawing on Aldridge's correspondence with theatre managers, Krystyna Kujawska Courtney observes that "the actor signed most of his letters as 'An Actor of Color known as the African Roscius' or 'African Tragedian.' All his playbills and theatrical announcements in Europe stressed his racial provenance." See Courtney, "Ira Aldridge, Shakespeare, and Color-Conscious Performances in Nineteenth-Century Europe," in *Colorblind Shakespeare: New Perspectives on Race and Performance*, ed. Ayanna Thompson (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006), 103–22, quotes on 107.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.
- ²⁵ Bate, "Staging the Unspeakable," 102.
- ²⁶ See Kendra Bean, *Vivien Leigh: An Intimate Portrait* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2013), 204.
- ²⁷ *Titus Andronicus*, Q1 (1594), 2.4. The Folio direction reads: "Enter the Empresse Sonnes, with Lauinia, her hands cut off and her tongue cut out, and rauisht" (F1 [1623], 2.4).
- ²⁸ Ravenscroft, *Titus Andronicus*, 3.1.26.
- ²⁹ Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 247 (emphasis in original). "Object" is Lucius's term for the spectacle of Lavinia's mutilated body: "Ay me, this object kills me" (3.1.65).
- ³⁰ Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26.
- ³¹ Holly Williams, "Titus Andronicus, Shakespeare's Globe, Theatre Review," *Independent*, May 2, 2014, available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/titus-andronicus-shakespeare-s-globe-theatre-review-9315656.html>.
- ³² Qtd. in Antony Sher and Gregory Doran, *Woza Shakespeare! Titus Andronicus in South Africa* (London: Methuen Drama, 1996), 218.
- ³³ Richard David, "Drams of Eale, A Review of Recent Productions," *Shakespeare Survey* 10 (1957): 126–24, quote on 127; Bate, "Staging the Unspeakable," 104.
- ³⁴ Hugo Vickers, *Vivien Leigh* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988), 228.
- ³⁵ Angus McBean, *Vivien: A Love Affair in Camera*, ed. Adrian Woodhouse (Oxford: Phaidon, 1989), 14.
- ³⁶ Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.
- ³⁷ Adrian Woodhouse, *Masters of Photography: Angus McBean* (London: Macdonald, 1985), n.p.
- ³⁸ The photograph could be read in relation to Laura Mulvey's concept of the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of female bodies in narrative cinema, particularly during Hollywood's Golden Age, which McBean acknowledges as an influence on his style: "we had become accustomed in the 1930s to the seemingly endless flow of marmoreal beauties from the film world and took note of their

style" (*Vivien*, 14). See Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 26, no. 3 (1975): 6–18, quote on 11.

³⁹ Bean, *Vivien Leigh*, 51.

⁴⁰ See Richard Dyer's *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1986) for a discussion of how star phenomena are made up and how they function. When the photographs in question were taken, Aldridge's and Leigh's stars were at similar stages of their lives, sixteen or seventeen years on from their first mass exposure, if dated from Aldridge's *Othello* at Covent Garden and Leigh's announcement as Scarlett O'Hara.